SU Roundup

Throne Speech makes all the usual promises

by John Campbell
UNBSU VP Executive

On Tuesday, November 19th our provincial government began sitting for their fifth session of the 54th Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick. Of course, to start off this session, a speech from the throne was made by the Honorable Marilyn Trenholme Counsell, Lieutenant-Governor of our province.

This speech, written by Premier Bernard Lord lays out the government's plan of action for some time to come. It's a chance to do some bragging, blame the old Liberal government for all the problems, and make a whole lot of promises on just about everything.

Of course, there was lots of talk about health care, tax reform, cutting government red tape, innovation, and health care. There weren't many new surprises for the province, just a lot of promises to keep old promises, and the same old same old for post-secondary education.

In 1999, Premier Lord made education one of his funding priorities, however, his focus was on elementary and secondary schools. No one will argue that these parts of the education system need more funding, but it shouldn't come at the expense of post-secondary education.

What happens when these students graduate high school and leave because they can get a cheaper, higher quality education elsewhere in country? Well, Premier Lord gets to start a nice flashy campaign to hop around the country trying to convince people to come back. It may not be the most efficient or economically responsible way to do things, but it sure makes Lord look good as he plays the role of shepherd looking for the lost sheep of New Brunswick across Canada.

Without showing his cards, the Tory Government said they are going to increase funding for universities again for another three years. This can't be all bad, even though they didn't actually say how much they were going to increase it by. Hopefully, Premier Lord and Finance Minister Peter Mesheau will loosen the purse strings a bit and help our universities out.

Currently we get a 2% increase each year. Actually it's more like 1.74% since the formula they used to calculate the amount of money was flawed.

And besides that, the supposed 2% doesn't even cover our inflation here at UNB, which is over 3% when you take into account all of our technology and specialized equipment.

Even with the promise of increased funding to post-secondary education, our government has again forgotten the students. More money to schools will help slow down the increase in tuition, but it does not address the growing student poverty issue. We are going further and further and debt, and it's getting harder and harder to find ways of paying for our education. Some students here at UNB have already had to drop out just because of the financial burden.

However, there is a ray of light in this situation, but it's not from the throne speech. We were contacted yesterday by the Education department to have a meeting with the Education minister, deputy minister, and Student Union presidents from around the province to sit down and talk about some of the issues that students face.

So even though Premier Lord, a past student leader and a former Chair of the New Brunswick Student Alliance, may have forgotten about the students of this province, it's good to know that someone in the government hasn't.

So it's time to sit back down at the table with our government and play this game we play. I'm hopeful that at this table we'll get something more then the "Royal Flush" we got from this year's Throne Speech.

UNB budget cuts threaten program

IDS students risk not graduating

by Concerned IDS Students

For the past while, students have been complaining about rising tuition costs while the quality of their education has been dropping. While we understand that this is part of a larger national financial crisis, UNB's mandate is clear in its goals. Its recent round of budget cuts are forcing the end of the Fine Arts program, and now other programs, such as International Development Studies (IDS) are being selectively eliminated.

The IDS program at UNB addresses global development and world issues in a progressive manner by approaching them from their roots. Part of UNB's mandate is ". . .to serve as a source of information and expertise to help society understand and deal with the major issues and opportunities of our time; To encourage the development of a network of international cooperation in teaching, research and community development."

You would think that a program such as IDS would be compatible with, if not an integral means of achieving this goal. IDS students and members of the IDA (International Development Association) have traveled the world, doing development internships and studying in Cuba, Sweden, Nepal, Tunisia, South Africa, Argentina, Europe, The Czech Republic, Chile, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, Slovenia, Bhutan, and Thailand. Students and graduates have also been instrumental in development projects such as the YMCA international, ecotourism, food production, and community development. One student even started an NGO, which has built a school in Nepal.

Students are attracted to the program from all over. Some have transferred to UNB specifically for IDS, while others have transferred from other faculties, or included it in their Engineering or Science degrees. We also attract students from Mexico, Brazil, Aruba, and the United States, to name a few.

UNB has just received recognition from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as being on the forefront of development work. This year's enrolment in IDS courses is at its highest ever.

Why then, did UNB decide to cut half of the IDS program? This year, we went from two stipends to one, which means that one of our two core courses cannot be taught. While we know that most of UNB is undergoing cuts (with a few exceptions), how many programs lost half of their funding?

What's worse is that the students are caught in the middle of the issue. At least three students need the course to graduate, and there is no suitable alternative course offered at UNB. Because of UNB's irresponsibility in dealing with this situation, these students, facing the stressful end-of-semester crunch, also have to worry about not being able to graduate.

With this article, we are trying to expose the shortsightedness of the university's budget cuts. By cutting our program by 50%, they are essentially strangling this growing program, and removing its future viability. Worse still is the fact that UNB is ignoring the current national trend by other Canadian universities, U of C, Guelph, U of T, St FX, and Dalhousie to name a few, who are pumping money into this growing, respected field.

UNB is abandoning its mandate, its students, and its commitment to international and community development. It is UNB's responsibility to follow this mandate, whatever the cost. IDS lost one stipend–half of our program–and saved UNB $3800. Will your program be next?

STUDENT UNION
UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

Amendments to the UNB Student Union Constitution & Bylaws

1st reading January 14 - introduction of amendments to council
2nd reading January 21 - opportunity to add or delete amendments
3rd reading January 28 - final approval

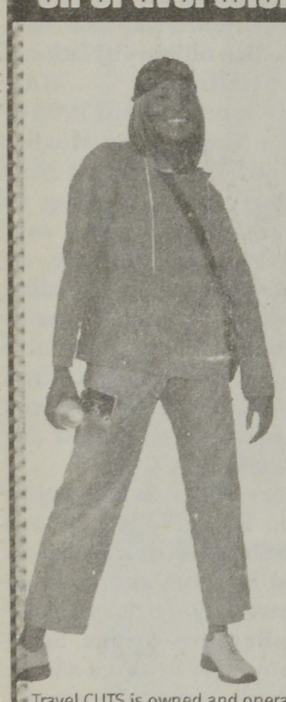
All readings will take place at the regular meetings of Council (5:30pm in SUB room 103). The meetings are open to all members of the UNBSU.

Amendments include:

- Changes to the election policy to reflect the new electronic voting system.
- Revised duties of the members of the executive team.
- Addition of section to address issue of executive power in the summer months.
- Amendment to section that deals with faculty representative seats on council.
- Amendments to strength the descriptions of the committees of council.
- Addition of an off-campus housing committee to reflect the new housing website service offered by the Student Union.
- Additions to the section entitled "Respect to Recognition of Organizations" to assist with Council in their deliberations concerning funded and non-funded recognition of club and societies.

Detailed copies of the amendments will be posted on the walls outside the main office of the Student Union (room 126 in the SUB). Copies will also be available for UNBSU members to pick up from the main office. For more information, e-mail: unbsu@unb.ca

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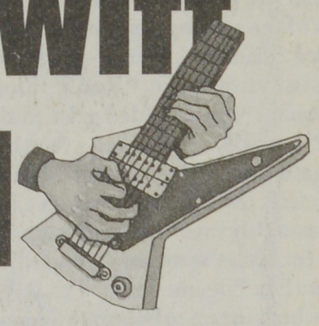


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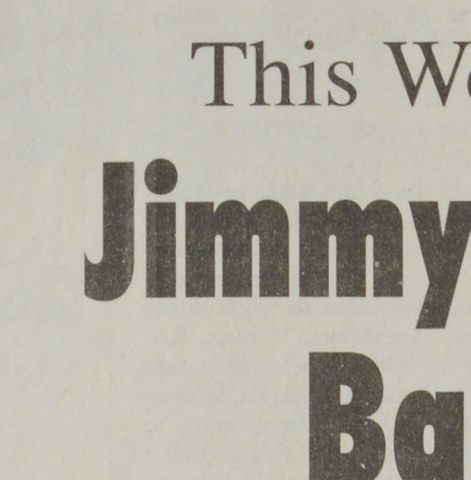
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